

SELFRIDGE FIELD, BUILDINGS NOS. 228, 230,
232, 234, 236
(Double Set of NCO Quarters)
(Family Housing)
228, 230, 232, 234, 236 George Ave.
Mt. Clemens vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER NO. MI-116-M

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Great Lakes Systems Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102-2571

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SELFRIDGE FIELD

BUILDINGS #228, #230, #232,
#234 and #236

HAER No. MI-116-M

(DOUBLE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS QUARTERS)
(Family Housing)

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: 228, 230, 232, 234 and 236 George Avenue
Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mt. Clemens vicinity,
Macomb County, Michigan

Quad/UTM: U.S.G.S. Mount Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.350730.4719050 (228 George)
17.350760.4719050 (230 George)
17.350780.4719050 (232 George)
17.350800.4719050 (234 George)
17.350830.4719050 (236 George)

Date of Construction: 1927

Present Owner: Air National Guard
3500 Fetchet Avenue
Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, 20762

Present Use: Residential

Significance: These buildings are representative of the Georgian Revival architecture present through the cantonment area, with simple porches and restrained details such as corbelling, window hoods and returns. They are the first residential housing on base built from standardized plans and all played a central role in the lives of non-commissioned personnel stationed at the base. They also are excellent examples of the architectural expression that defined the character of the Cantonment area of the base, a style flourishing in the United States at the nation's Sesquicentennial and inspired by Rockefeller's Williamsburg re-creation.

The architectural and functional "core" of Selfridge, the original base, constructed prior to World War II, presents a virtually unique resource in Michigan. Few airfields that were exclusively military in genesis were built in the state and Selfridge is the oldest and best preserved example of its type. The concentration of brick structures built in the cantonment area of the base from the mid-1920s into the early 1930s form a cohesive assemblage.

Historian: William E. Rutter, Midwest Environmental Consultants, May, 1996

II. HISTORY

Buildings #228, #230, #232, #234 and #236, are identical "Double Non-Commissioned Officers Quarters"¹ erected in December, 1927 from plans provided by the Construction Service Office of the Quartermaster General. Each contained 1,876 square feet and were built at 228, 230, 232, 234 and 236 George Street at a cost of \$11,000.² The A.M. Kutsche and Company, Builders, of Detroit, erected them.³ In 1993 the roofs were replaced with fireproof polymer shingle molded to resemble slate.⁴ All continue to serve as base housing today.

This residential building type represents one of the six distinct yet complementary varieties of non-commissioned officer's residential housing erected during the base permanent construction program initiated during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This residential core of the Cantonment District housed non-commissioned officers, a purpose it continues to serve today.

¹Original construction plans and elevations on file Selfridge Base Civil Engineering

²Mihalak, Joseph, Evolution of Family Housing Selfridge Air National Guard Base Mount Clemens, Michigan, p.12.

³Photograph on file, historic photograph file, Selfridge Base Museum.

⁴Interview, Vechel Olson, Head of Operations and Maintenance, Selfridge Civil Engineering, April 30, 1996.

The Cantonment district is unified by its historical frame of reference, with all buildings being built within a 7 year period between 1927 and 1934.⁵ These buildings replaced the frame, temporary buildings that were the hallmark of the original Selfridge Field, dating to ca. 1917 to 1918. Stylistically, all are substantial architect-designed buildings executed in a brick medium. All but the most functional structures display strong references to the Georgian Revival style in massing and in elements such as arched windows, quoins, and classical pediments.

This complex of buildings was built at the core of the original Selfridge Air National Guard Base and today is still the most distinctive cluster of architecture on base. The brick structures present today form a consistent entity of Georgian Revival architecture in the residential housing and duplexes (#220s to #250s series), and the administrative and support facilities (#300 to #350 and #3 to #199 series). It includes hangars, officers housing, barracks, squadron operations/control tower, specialized buildings such as the fire station, a parachute house and other maintenance and support facilities.

Buildings in the Cantonment area played a significant part in Selfridge's role as

⁵Nigro, Louis, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, An Unofficial History, p. x.

a training base during the war. The base expanded outward spatially and the number of base structures mushroomed rapidly during the war. Although most of the new buildings were constructed in the base's newly acquired zones, a number were erected in proximity to the Cantonment core. Still, the Cantonment District provided a structural, functional, and stylistic anchor for the base.

III. DESCRIPTION

Although there are a total of 19 houses comprising the National Guard-administered brick Cantonment residential district, the total number of house types executed is six, executed in two floor plan types. All designs are very similar, with distinct and obvious references to Georgian Revival style. All are studiously symmetrical, all are executed in brick. All of these houses are rectangular plan, two story duplexes, with side gabled or hipped roofs. They display symmetrical four bay facades, all originally featuring paired center entry doors for the constituent duplexes, although several have been converted to side entry duplexes. All have projecting entry vestibules and rear porches and some possess side elevation sun porches. Although all residential housing is standard in plan, slight differences in porches, trim and window treatment offer

some variation among the assemblage.

The duplexes at 228 through 236 George Street are the smallest in size of the NCO double quarters present on the base, and are confined to the south side of George Avenue. They present rectangular plan, 37 foot 4 inch wide by 25 foot deep, side gabled brick structures resting on a concrete foundation and shielded by a replacement polymer shingle roof molded to resemble the original slate. Brick is laid in standard bond and windows have cast masonry sills. Lintels are soldier bond while sills are masonry. A chimney breaks the roof line to the rear of the gable ridge near the center of the building. The facade (north) elevation of this duplex type is explicitly symmetrical, comprised of four bays consisting of corner entry doors flanked by paired windows on the first story while the patterns on the second story is composed of an oculus window above the doors that is flanked by paired windows identical to those on the first story.

The entire first story facade of each duplex is shielded by a classically inspired entry veranda displaying simple columns supporting a wide frieze and unadorned balustrade. The porch occurs above a wooden grill apron and is accessed by concrete steps. The side elevations are mirror images, displaying

a purely functional piercing pattern. Two windows occur in the concrete basement water table flanking a door that occur between three first story windows, while a single window occurs on the second story and a small gable window occupies a position below the steel ridge vent. The rear (south) elevation is also symmetrical defined by three bays in each duplex consisting of a first story corner entry door shielded by a flat roofed unadorned entry stoop supported by plain pillars flanked by two wood sash windows, while the second story piercing pattern is composed of a small sash window above the entrance flanked by two windows identical to those on the first story directly below. The roofs on all of these buildings have been replaced and the entry doors have been upgraded to a "colonial" six panel steel replacement door.

The floor plans of duplex buildings #228 through #236 are identical. One enters a side hall plan facing stairs leading to the second floor. Turning into the house is a living room to the rear of which is located a kitchen, the largest in floor area of the NCO duplex variants on base. Ascending the stairs to a landing one views a corner bathroom and upon turning, enters a hall leading to two bedrooms and an end closet (with an oculus window). The interior details remain generally intact, although the kitchen and bathrooms have been renovated and fixtures replaced. Linoleum flooring covers the kitchen and

bathrooms. Window and door trim is restrained and unornamented, consisting of simple 1 by 3 inch boards. The newel post in the living room stair displays turned molding and finial ball. The bedrooms feature wall closets with replacement plain metal or wood louvered track doors, while the bathroom has been renovated with recent vintage ceramic tile walls and floor. The house basement contains a boiler room and coal bin. Floors are oak, walls are plaster on masonry and display a cornice molding and an 8 inch baseboard with concave cap molding. Window and door trim is 4 1/2" wide unornamented faceboard. Radiator hot water heat and electric base board heat is used in the house.

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Anonymous, Brief History of Selfridge Air Force Base, 1917-1960, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1960.

Mihalak, Joseph, Evolution of Family Housing Selfridge Air National Guard Base Mount Clemens, Michigan, Historical Office, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, 20, January, 1988.

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